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ABSTRACT

This paper explains the clinical induction experience for beginning school principals. It reflects two themes: emphasis on supervised practice and demonstrated competence as well as networking and collaboration among stakeholders. Generally, it describes the intricacies of an experimental program developed by Louisiana State University faculty in coordination with four other Louisiana institutions of higher learning, and representatives of the public sectors and public and private schools, all funded by the national Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) program. Undergirding the program's intentions is the desire to develop a more relevant set of instructional activities that capitalize on the new principals' first work context and to further research and development into more appropriate and realistic beginning principal induction models. Specifically, it recounts the program's origins; explains its objectives and procedures; justifies and clarifies student assessment rationale and policies; describes leadership development activities including but not limited to field-based experiences, seminars, and coursework; examines principal planned seminars; and discusses ongoing and postassessment program evaluation. (JAM)

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TOWARD A CLINICAL INDUCTION SYSTEM FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

by

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RUNNING HEAD: CLINICAL INDUCTION

A paper presented at the annual meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Cincinnati, Ohio, October, 1988.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (NCEEA), Leaders for America's Schools (1987), poses a number of challenging questions about what public schools, professional organizations, universities, state and federal policymakers, and the private sector can do to promote improved leadership in our schools. Among the possible answers to the questions presented in the report are the following:

1. The federal government should provide increased funding for research applicable to school administration. Such funding should serve as a catalyst for encouraging public schools, professional organizations, and universities to pool their resources to improve the profession.

2. The report encourages the field of educational administration to draw from the best practices and knowledge of management in the private sector and in relevant professions. Businesses and industries are encouraged to support research and development programs focused on the clinical phases of preparation. Such support might include technical assistance to educational agencies in the development of optimum uses of technology as well as the development of joint or collaborative training arrangements.

3. Universities are encouraged to offer programs for aspiring educational leaders characterized by a sequenced and mentored path from theory to practice. Preparation programs are to be designed in terms of five dimensions ranging from the study of administration to supervised practice and actual demonstration of competence. Emphasizing the need for colleagueship and

becoming accustomed to seeking and giving advice in close working relationships, it is suggested that students move through leader preparation as members of a cohort.

If the questions posed by this report can be called challenging, the possible answers noted above are necessarily just as challenging. A stimulus for the questions and answers noted above seems to be a need for more clearly defined means-ends relationships pertinent to the preparation of school leaders.

In this quest for a more promising preparation sequence, two themes seem apparent. First, there appears to be a feeling that preparation programs need to go beyond an emphasis on reading assignments, term papers and the lecture-discussion method. There is an apparent emergence of interest in exploring preparation alternatives that emphasize application, supervised practice, clinical experiences and operational definitions demonstrating competence. Second, there is a feeling that there are many sectors of society that have a stake in fostering excellence in educational administration (e.g., school districts, businesses and industries, universities, professional associations, state and federal governments, ethnic minorities). As a result, networking or collaboration among stakeholders to bring about the improvement of preparation in educational administration is seen as a worthwhile undertaking.

Interest in the theory-practice relationship has been with the field of educational administration for quite some time.

Recall a UCEA monograph on the professorship in educational administration edited more than twenty years ago by Willower and Culbertson (1964). During the years between the publication of that UCEA monograph and UCEA's more recent Leaders for America's Schools, there have been noteworthy experiments involving an increased emphasis on clinical experiences in administrator preparation (e.g., Earlandson, 1986; or Licata and Ellis, 1976).

In many states, the certification requirements and subsequent preparation usually require experience as a teacher, a masters degree and specific graduate courses in various content areas of educational administration such as school finance, school law, the principalship, or supervision of instruction. Cases, simulations, role playing are sometimes used to stress application of knowledge and skills taught in the courses. The preparation program often requires a directed field experience in which individuals frequently employed as teachers have the opportunity to observe and sometimes participate in selected administrative activities.

Some institutions offer internships in which a prospective administrator actually performs in a particular leadership role for six months to a year under the supervision of an experienced administrator and a university professor. While each experience seems useful, an important and, for the most part, untapped setting for authentic interaction about theory and practice is the one encountered by newly hired school administrators during their first years of service.

Once a person is hired as a school administrator, little

university support is usually available to complete "a sequenced and mentored" path from theory to practice that many preparation programs view as key to improved leader preparation. While some might argue about who is responsible for providing planned and supervised induction experiences, this paper examines the proposition that university professors, school districts and other professional groups share a stake in the professional success of new school administrators and can work together in providing useful induction experiences.

The purpose of this paper is to describe a clinical induction experience for beginning school principals that at least in part reflects the two themes noted above: (1) emphasis on supervised practice and demonstrated competence as well as (2) networking and collaboration among stakeholders. Along with description, this paper briefly discusses the results of initial evaluation of the program. Rather than present a highly conceptual or speculative treatment of the subject, the authors' intent is to share with the reader the "nuts and bolts" of an experimental program for beginning school principals. The intent is not to suggest a model of exemplary practice but rather a possible stimulus for continued research and development.

Background

Throughout the United States, training and technical assistance centers are being established to improve educational leadership in our schools. The national Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) program provides matching funds

to universities, professional associations or other institutions to support a training and technical assistance center for educational leaders in each state. The staff at each center is charged with involving practicing school administrators, professional association officials, leadership academy personnel, business, industry and government leaders in planning a center that meets the needs for educational leadership in their state.

While numerous LEAD models are available, each attempts to provide the training and technical assistance necessary to help principals and other administrators implement an emerging vision of what school leaders and their schools ought to be. Taking a page from Leaders...(NCEEA, 1987), such a vision often involves a view of the school as a learning community in which standards are high and understood by students and staff alike. School leadership is understood in terms of empowering teachers, parents and community leaders to work together in solving key instructional problems.

Such a technical assistance network is in place in Louisiana to help principals with less than five years experience improve their instructional leadership skills. Faculty in educational administration at Louisiana State University offer program development and technical assistance to educational administration faculty at four other universities in the state who, in turn, provide training and technical assistance to a cohort of fifteen beginning principals in their respective regions. Technical Assistance Centers are in operation at Northeast Louisiana

University, Southeastern Louisiana University, the University of Southwestern Louisiana and the University of New Orleans. LSU is responsible for program development and evaluation as well as preparing faculty at these four centers to deliver an assessment system and school problem-solving model to participating principals and their schools.

The project is supported with matching funds from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Research and Improvement, Education Network Division and the five participating universities through the national Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) program. A Policy Advisory Board composed of leaders from business and industry, local and state government, education and professional development organizations serves to develop LEAD policy and to assist in the acquisition of resources to support LEAD once the three-year term of current federal support ends.

Beginning the Program

As a starting point, faculty at four technical assistance centers at Northeast Louisiana University, Southeastern Louisiana University, the University of Southwestern Louisiana and the University of New Orleans implement a comprehensive assessment of each principal's professional performance and school work environment. Focusing on diagnostic profiles derived from the results of work environment assessment, LEAD faculty teach each participating principal how to share these results with a school-wide action committee in defining key instructional problems. The

center faculty also assist principals in analyzing the assessment of their performance, planning subsequent professional development seminars and implementing those seminars.

In addition to educational administration faculty, each center has developed a network of fifty or more leaders from other college faculties, business and industry, government, the State Department of Education and professional associations. As associate faculty, these leaders are available to mentor principals individually or to offer special seminars addressing principal needs identified through assessment results.

Recruitment of LEAD principals is done by faculty in each regional Technical Assistance Center. All superintendents of schools in a particular state region served by a Technical Assistance Center are contacted by the director of the center and asked for nominations of possible participants who have less than five years of experience as a principal. The director screens these nominees in terms of a number of factors and selects 15 for a LEAD principal group.

In order to make the requirements for participation clear, each principal must obtain the signature of his/her superintendent on a letter of commitment that clearly spells out the time required away from school for seminars, assessment activities and the activities of the in-school teacher action committee. LEAD seminars begin during the second month of the school year and meet regularly until schools close for summer, with approximately two meetings per month. Upon successful completion of the program,

principals receive needed professional development points from the Louisiana Leadership Academy.

Assessment

The starting point for all activities is assessment for diagnostic purposes. Principals receive a diagnostic profile highlighting multiple dimensions of the school work environment. This information can be helpful to the principal and the in-school action committee in defining important instructional problems. Principals also receive a diagnostic profile of their job performance as a principal and of their ability to articulate and implement a professional vision of what their school can and ought to be. In each case, profiles are based on data generated from two sets of the various instruments. One set is completed by principals and the other by teachers. The diagnostic profiles present comparisons of principal and teacher perceptions as well as comparisons of principal or teacher perceptions with those of the total LEAD sample of principals or teachers.

School Work Environment Instruments

The Teacher Attitude Inventory (TAI) is an instrument designed to measure teacher attitudes toward the school work environment (Elliott and Masters, 1977). The TAI is derived from the larger School Survey developed as a measure of teacher work morale in the early 1970's through the Industrial Relations Center at the University of Chicago (Coughlan and Cooke, 1974). The 56-item version used in Louisiana LEAD is composed of the following

subscales: 1) Supervisory Relations; 2) Administrative Policies and Support; 3) Materials and Equipment; 4) Staff Relations; 5) Work Load; 6) Educational Effectiveness; 7) Buildings and Facilities; 8) Student Evaluation Practices; and 9) Time-Organization/Management. All teachers in a LEAD school respond to the TAI. In addition, principals are asked to predict what they believe the typical teacher response to each TAI item will be.

The Robustness Semantic Differential (RSD) is a general measure of school climate as viewed by teachers and their principals (Licata and Willower, 1978). In the LEAD assessment system, the RSD is applied to the following school-related concepts: 1) My Role As A Teacher (or Principal); 2) My Principal (or Teachers); 3) My Students; and 4) My Students' Parents. The RSD reflects the empathy principals and teachers have for everyday life in their school organization. As is the case with the TAI, the RSD has been used in a variety of studies over the past 10-12 years (e.g., Eisenhauer, Willower and Licata, 1984/85; Ellett and Licata, 1982). The results of more recent research with the RSD demonstrate positive relationships between teacher responses to key school-related concepts and student achievement and attendance (Morris & Ellett, 1988; Ortiz & Ellett, 1988). Both the TAI and RSD profiles are used by LEAD in-school action committees as part of the process of defining key school problems to be solved through the LEAD program.

Principal Performance Instruments

The Principal Performance Description Survey (PPDS) consists

of 76 statements of principals' on-the-job performance classified in five functional areas of responsibility: 1) Curriculum and Instruction; 2) Staff Personnel; 3) Pupil Personnel; 4) System-wide Policies and Operation; and 5) School/Community. The PPDS was developed over a four-year period as part of Project HOME at the University of Georgia (Ellett and Payne, 1977). Items comprising the PPDS have been positively correlated with teacher work morale and student achievement and attendance (Ellett, Payne and Perkins, 1976). Diagnostic profiles based on teacher and principal responses to the PPDS provide partial grounds for the planning of LEAD supplemental seminars targeting principals' personal professional development.

The School Vision Inventory (SVI) is a new instrument undergoing development within the College of Education at Louisiana State University. The SVI consists of 15 items that measure the degree to which a principal is able to articulate a vision of what the school can and ought to become. The measure also assesses the principal's ability to convince others to share his/her vision and to make sacrifices toward its accomplishment (Greenfield, Licata and Ellett, 1987). SVI diagnostic profiles based on teacher and principal responses are combined with PPDS profiles to plan supplemental professional development seminars addressing assessed needs of LEAD principals.

Leadership Development

School Problem-Solving Seminars

Louisiana LEAD employs a school problem-solving model called Consequence Analysis (Licata, 1978). The model makes principals aware of research on schools as social systems and formal organizations and its implications for the structure of problem solving activities in their schools. This model is composed of five phases: 1) Initiating Structure; 2) Defining A Problem; 3) Charting Alternatives; 4) Planning for Problem Solution; and 5) Implementing Objectives. Participating principals gain familiarity with this model through readings in a programmed text and through analysis of cases presented in problem-solving seminars by LEAD staff. Beginning with the first seminar termed "Initiating Structure," a LEAD faculty member models the behavior of a principal in organizing an in-school committee, scheduling meetings during the regular school day and structuring the committee's communications with teachers and others in the school community (Licata, Ellis and Wilson, 1977). Such modeling of principal behavior takes place in subsequent monthly seminars focusing on each of the remaining steps in the Consequence Analysis process.

A field manual for principals guides the activities of LEAD faculty in the problem-solving seminars and LEAD principals in working with their in-school action committees. This manual provides five performance objectives and supporting materials which help principals implement the five key steps of Consequence

Analysis in their schools. These supporting materials include practice cases for problem analysis, prints for overhead transparencies, guidelines for action and supplemental references. Each objective states what is expected of the principal in leading a school problem-solving committee (Licata, 1989; Licata and Ellis, 1976). A detailed instructor's manual is made available to center faculty by LSU faculty.

LEAD staff ask participating principals to record their in-school meetings on audio or videotapes. They are advised to follow guidelines for taping provided in the field manual. Committees must approve the taping of their meetings and have the option of turning the recorder off at any time in a meeting. During the school problem-solving seminars at LEAD centers, sometimes time is provided in seminars for principals to critique audio or videotapes of in-school meetings. Seminar participants critique the tape-recorded meetings in terms of the outcomes specified in the problem-solving objectives. LEAD center staff encourage principals to consider possible alternatives they might employ in providing appropriate leadership and in working with their teacher action committees.

Triangulation

Successful completion of the five problem-solving objectives is verified through the use of a triangulation interview procedure implemented in schools. Three interviews are conducted by LEAD faculty, one with the LEAD school administrator, and two with members serving on the principal's problem-solving committee.

Each person interviewed has developed a perspective/point of view about the implementation of elements of consequence analysis and school improvement at the school level. Together, the three perspectives represent more than one organizational role or position. Each principal and committee member is individually interviewed to provide a cross-check on perspectives of those implementing the LEAD consequence analysis model (Licata and Norman, 1979).

Outcomes for each problem-solving objective are stated as a question on the triangulation interview form. Interviewers prepare for the triangulation interview by reviewing the minutes and tape recordings of each committee meeting. The interviewer separately discusses each question (outcome) with the three committee members using standardized procedures and then scores their responses. A conference between the LEAD faculty member and the participating principal follows the triangulation interview process for the purpose of commending the principal for successful performance and identifying avenues for continued school improvement/professional development.

Triangulation interviews conducted with participating principals at the end of the first year of school problem solving suggest that principals in each center were successful in accomplishing approximately 80 percent of the total possible outcomes specified in the five problem solving objectives. Principals encountered the most difficulty with the last objective dealing with actual implementation of the problem solution in

their schools. Some committees deferred implementation until the following fall; others got a late start due to center directors' first experience with the program; others probably fell prey to social context factors that historically have inhibited change in schools. Subsequent program modifications are in place with the second year cohorts to address these possible problems.

Principal Planned Seminars

While school environment profiles (TAI and RSD) serve as the basis for LEAD school problem-solving activity, principals employ the PPDS and SVI profiles as starting points to plan a series of supplemental seminars to address areas of assessed strengths and weaknesses in their own performance. During an initial meeting, LEAD staff at the regional centers assist each cohort of principals in identifying common needs based on the assessment profiles. Each group plans a series of supplemental seminars to address these needs over the course of the year. LEAD staff and associate faculty serving each technical assistance center work with the principals to identify seminar content/presenters and to schedule meeting times and places.

As an example, one principal group may decide that information is needed to better understand how computers can be used to enhance instructional leadership. They might plan a number of supplemental meetings to meet this need. The LEAD regional staff would assemble professionals from other colleges and universities, local businesses and government to deliver the supplemental seminars. The principal group may decide to meet

twice monthly for five months at a local school district's professional development center. The center has a computer classroom and other meeting facilities. Each meeting might begin with a two and one-half hour session on the use of computers to enhance instructional leadership skills. Each of these sessions ends with an assignment of an in-school application.

At another regional center, the principal group might identify the following five areas for professional development: 1) working with beginning teachers; 2) helping experienced teachers grow professionally; 3) involving parents in instructional planning; 4) examining student motivation; and 5) networking possibilities for new principals. They might also decide to hold both supplemental seminars and school problem-solving seminars at each meeting. The groups' meetings might be held at the training center of a local corporation (first month), a government office building (for two months) and at two different universities (last two months). These locations might reflect work places for the various individuals who are to deliver the supplemental seminars.

Follow-up and Networking

At the end of the school year, implementation of a post-assessment occurs using the same assessment instruments previously described. In addition to helping evaluate the effectiveness of school problem solving and other LEAD activities, the post-assessment yields profiles used by participating principals and

in-school action committees to define problems for the next year's activities. Each LEAD center will begin the next school year with a new group of principals and will also provide follow-up support for the previous year's group. This support includes both continuing professional development and in-school problem solving.

As part of continuing support, second year LEAD principals have been invited to join first year principals at selected problem-solving seminars and supplemental seminars. These sessions may provide useful opportunities for peer support and for sharing professional experiences. This kind of follow-up activity in LEAD may lead to the development of a peer network to provide continuing help and support for new principals.

Principals' Views of the Program

An interim program/process evaluation of the Louisiana LEAD effort (Ellett, 1988) has generated some interesting and, for the most part, very supportive results. Responses to a survey of LEAD principals show positive support for the LEAD concept, training seminars, supplemental seminars and field-based approach to professional development. Importantly, the vast majority of Louisiana LEAD principals believe the potential of LEAD to enhance their professional development and improve student achievement is good to excellent. LEAD seminars are viewed by principal participants as a more important avenue for continuing education and professional development than other traditional approaches such as in-service education offered through state or local parish

resources, professional associations and typical college/university courses. This positive evaluation of LEAD may be grounded in the field-based approach used to define and solve "real" school problems based on assessment system data and interactions with teachers at the individual school level.

The fact that the vast majority of Louisiana LEAD principals view the first phase of LEAD as pertinent to their role as a school principal suggests that program activities and components are reasonably grounded in the "everyday life" of the school and in principals' actual working environments. The willingness of LEAD principals to recommend LEAD to peer principals suggests a global, positive perception of the initial LEAD effort in Louisiana.

Thus, the interim evaluation of LEAD suggests that LEAD is off to a good start in Louisiana and is being viewed very positively by principal participants. This is an encouraging finding since the program is new, the organizational structure for program delivery is regional and principal participants are all non-paid volunteers. When combined with the fact that 58 of 60 original principals are still involved in the program, the interim evaluation results suggest that further experimentation with induction experiences like this one may be worthwhile avenues in improving preparation programs in educational administration.

Conclusion

Louisiana LEAD may be an example of the kind of collaboration

and support called for in Leaders for America's Schools. Institutions of higher education, representatives of the public sectors and public and private schools have joined hands in offering a year-long induction experience for four cohorts of beginning principals in Louisiana. The first experience with this system has been both encouraging and unsettling.

The program received much cooperation from various groups in Louisiana and at the same time resulted in some resistance from those who have a vested interest in the sometimes lucrative business of providing speeches instead of field-based training. Institutions of higher education who are not part of this network are supportive but anxious about not being part of this effort. While participants receive Leadership Academy points, the Academy for the most part has kept LEAD at arms length due to views that it may become a viable competitor.

At the school district and school level, LEAD principals are sometimes frustrated by superintendents that encourage participation in LEAD but seem to drag their feet in encouraging the kind of leadership presented in LEAD. The program encourages principals to work with their committees in ways that do not increase the hinderance level or tensions associated with teacher sense of autonomy, public vulnerability or pupil control. This has been an on-going challenge for all participants.

Clearly, one of the key issues of providing field-based induction experiences appears to be designing such experiences in ways that address the systemic realities that they must face. We

continue to work on this challenging aspect of program development and implementation. It is interesting that social system pressures address principals in school problem solving and a different set of pressures address the designers of this program in trying to examine alternatives in school administrator preparation at the state level.

The LEAD delivery system and induction program capitalize on the new principals' first work context as a means of providing a more job relevant set of instructional activities. This setting is usually not available in previous coursework provided toward certification and degrees. Delivery of instruction is based on multiple institutions each trying to serve in ways congruent with their differing missions. LSU offers research and development and regional institutions offer instruction and service. In terms of both the delivery system and the induction program, the results of this first field test suggest that induction systems may be a viable way to improve school principals' preparation. As to whether or not such efforts improve schools and principals' performance, examination of pre and post-test analyses should give some initial insights.

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